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Donovan Goes Abroad In an Air of Mystery

James B. Donovan, the Brooklyn lawyer with a proclivity for cloak-and-dagger adventures, sailed for Europe aboard the Queen Mary yesterday, but not before he added a note of mystery to the trip.

In disclosing his itinerary to reporters, Mr. Donovan, who is president of the Board of Education, said he would interrupt a vacation trip to England, France, Italy and Switzerland to take "a side trip" to Yugoslavia.

He would not say why he intended to spend "a few days" in the Communist country, except to explain that it involved "legal business" for a "paying client." However, he added mysteriously that he might see Yugoslav officials and that the trip could produce news.

Mr. Donovan negotiated the release of the U-2 pilot Francis Gary Powers from a Russian prison and also brought about the freeing of the captured invaders in the Bay of Pigs landing in Cuba.